



BEFORE YOU BUY A HOUSE IN PUGLIA

The questions that helped us find the right place

Introduction

We started our house hunt with a list.

Bedrooms. Home office. Land. Pool. Area. Town. The usual things.

And then we started viewing houses.

Some ticked almost every box and left us completely cold. Others were wrong on paper, but made us linger after the viewing was over.

Somewhere along the way, we realised that the most useful questions weren't always about square metres, bedrooms or specifications.

They were about **how we actually wanted to live.**

These are some of the questions we found ourselves asking along the way and that helped us understand what really mattered to us.

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I. Start with the life, not the house

It's surprisingly easy to start looking for houses before you've really thought about the life that is supposed to happen inside them.

- What does an ordinary Tuesday look like in the life you imagine here?
- How much of your day do you expect to spend outside?
- Do you want complete silence, or would that eventually feel too isolated?
- Do you really want to drive everywhere?
- How often do you imagine going into town?
- Does this life still appeal to you in January?
- Do you want to entertain and have guests coming to stay?
- Do you have any hobbies that require a particular kind of space?
- What do you like to do or see first when you get up in the morning?
- How do you spend your evenings in winter?

**Could you picture your everyday life here,
not just your holidays?**

2. Is this the life you both want?

Moving to Puglia was my dream. At first, it wasn't Ramon's.

I first took him here in 2007, and let's just say his heart didn't exactly skip a beat.

Over the years, we travelled a lot and often talked about growing old somewhere abroad together. We genuinely considered faraway places like Thailand and Hawaii. But for me there was always one condition: as long as my mother is still around, I don't want to leave Europe.

- Is this equally your dream, or does one of you want it more?
- If you're moving together, what does the other person need to make this life theirs too?
- Who are you leaving behind?
- How far away from them are you really prepared to live?
- What will keep you connected to the people who matter to you?
- Are there circumstances that could make you want, or need, to return?
- What will your life here revolve around?
- Where will your income come from?
- Does your work allow you to live here, or will you need to create something new?
- Are you keeping a way back, or are you comfortable closing that door?

**If there were no beautiful house involved,
would you still choose this life?**

3. Location feels different when you live here

Distances can be deceptive.

We've found that driving 25 kilometres here can take surprisingly little time compared to the Netherlands. There are fewer traffic lights, less congestion and often you simply keep moving. But the distance itself isn't the only thing that matters. Look closely at the last few kilometres.

We live on a bad road ourselves, and if you have to drive it several times a day, it starts to matter. It's hard on your car, delivery trucks may have trouble reaching you and, quite frankly, being shaken around in your car several times a day gets old pretty quickly.

So don't just ask: how far is it?

Ask: what is the road actually like? And would you still be happy driving this road two or three times a day?

- How close do you really want to be to town?
- Why have you chosen that particular town?
- Have you spent time in this town off-season?
- Have you driven the road to the house after dark?
- What happens to this road in August?
- How important is being near the sea once you actually live here?

**Would you choose the perfect house
in the wrong location?**

4. Forget the photographs for five minutes

During a viewing, stop looking at the house for five minutes. Stand outside. Don't talk. Don't take photographs. Just listen...

- What can you hear?
 - Can you hear a road?
 - Dogs?
 - Neighbours?
 - Agricultural machinery?
 - Is there wind?
- Where is the shade?
- Can you see neighbouring houses you hadn't noticed in the listing?
- Are there any overhead cables, pylons or antennas that disturb the view?
- What can you smell?
 - Animals?
 - Smoke?
 - Damp?
 - Drains?
 - Agricultural activity?

**Would you feel comfortable here
alone after dark?**

5. Your non-negotiables might not be non-negotiable

Now reconsider your original wish list:

I absolutely need...

I would really like...

I thought I needed this, but maybe I don't...

- Which requirement would you give up for the right house?
- What have you discovered during viewings that wasn't even on your original list?
- Are you rejecting a house because it doesn't fit your list, even though you love being there?

Or are you convincing yourself that you love a house simply because it ticks every box?

6. Can you see beyond what is there?

Houses for sale in Puglia aren't always presented at their best.

You may walk into rooms filled with furniture, outdated interiors or spaces that have been used in the same way for decades. Sometimes it takes a little imagination to see beyond what is there.

If you find that difficult, consider taking an interior designer with you to a viewing. Not to assess the technical or legal condition of the property — you'll need the appropriate professionals for that — but to help you look at the house differently.

Could the layout work better? Could two spaces become one? Where would the kitchen make most sense? Is that dark room actually a problem, or could it become something beautiful with a different layout?

Having someone beside you who can see the possibilities can help you understand a property's potential before you've made one of the biggest decisions of the entire project.

- Can you see beyond the furniture, clutter and current décor?
- Does the existing layout actually suit the way you want to live?
- Which spaces would you want to change, and why?
- Are you dismissing a property because of things that could relatively easily be changed?
- Or are you assuming that changes will be easy when they may be much more complicated?
- Can you picture how the house could feel rather than just how it looks today?

**Sometimes the right house doesn't look like
the right house yet.**

7. When guests come to stay

We love having family and friends come to stay

For a few days, I love having everyone close, but I've realised that for longer stays, I would prefer a separate guesthouse, giving everyone a little more privacy. Unfortunately, we are not allowed to build one.

Our guest room is separate from our main living area, which works beautifully when we have visitors. The downside is that it sits unused for much of the year. During our upcoming renovation, we're therefore connecting it to the rest of the house, so it becomes part of our everyday living space when we don't have guests.

If a separate guesthouse matters to you, don't assume that having enough land means you'll be allowed to build one.

- How often will family and friends realistically come to stay?
- How long are they likely to stay?
- Do you want guests inside your house or would you prefer everyone to have their own space?
- How much privacy do you need when people stay for a week or longer?
- Could a guest room have another purpose for the rest of the year?
- Is it connected to the house in a way that makes that practical?

Don't just count bedrooms. Think about what they will be doing for the other 45 or 50 weeks of the year.

8. The unromantic questions

Olive trees need looking after.

With larger trees, pruning isn't always something you can do yourself. You'll need people who know what they're doing and, in some cases, specialist equipment such as a cherry picker.

Puglia is also dealing with the devastating effects of Xylella, a bacterial disease that kills olive trees and affects other plants too, which makes caring for your trees even more important.

- Do you really want a hectare of land, or do you love the idea of owning a hectare of land?
- Who is going to maintain it?
- What will that cost?
- Where does the water come from?
- Is there enough water in August?
- How much work will the pool require?
- How many olive trees are you actually taking responsibility for?
- If you aren't here all year, who will look after everything?

**The land may be beautiful.
But are you ready to look after it?**

One last question...

If this house didn't have to impress anyone else, would you still choose it?

**Take your list with you.
But don't let it do all the deciding.**

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